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A MOSES LEGEND

By SAMUEL KRAUSS, Vienna

THE manuscript which sees light here for the first time comes from the valuable collection of manuscripts of Mr. Elkan Adler in London, and its origin is most probably either Persia or Yemen. The few leaves which form the subject of our inquiry are incorporated in a quite bulky volume in quarto which contains heterogeneous matter in great quantity and in motley diversity, and from which I have published an Oriental *Ketubba*¹ and a version of the well-known *Toldot Jeshu*.²

Our manuscript deserves the name Midrash of the type of many similar edifying stories in the well-known collection of Jellinek; it, moreover, deals with a biblical personage, viz. Moses, and constitutes a series of stories rather than one continuous and uninterrupted story. To judge from the contents, however, our narrative belongs to the large domain of ethical fables (מעשיות), for the mere reason that, as will be shown, it is a product of the Arabic age.

To facilitate a survey of the contents, I have divided the theme in three chapters.

The first chapter tells the following tale: When Moses was feeding the sheep of Jethro in the wilderness, an angel

¹ ZfhB., V, 29 f.

² Krauss, *Leben Jesu nach jüd. Quellen*, 118 f.

(מלאך) approached him in the shape of a white wolf (זאב), and demanded a sheep from him to satisfy his hunger. Moses, the faithful shepherd, refused his demand, claiming that the sheep did not belong to him, whereupon the wolf made him run to Jethro and obtain permission, promising to guard the flock meanwhile. Jethro gave his permission, but when Moses returned to the flock, the wolf had disappeared. The story breaks off at this point, and we are left in the dark as to whether Moses was aware of the angelic nature of the talking wolf. This omission serves to prove that it was not the object of the narrator to show that Moses communicated with transcendental beings, but rather to furnish evidence of Moses' true and faithful discharge of his duties as a shepherd.

The second chapter is considerably larger. A deceitful old man (זקן) joins Moses, and they wander together in the wilderness. Altogether they have five loaves of bread, of which they consume two each in two halting-places, while the fifth disappears in the hands of the old man. Being in the sad plight of starvation, Moses performs miracles with the divine staff in his hand: he seizes deer, whose flesh they consume, and whose bones he resuscitates to new life. He also causes water to flow from a rock. Furthermore, it is related as an episode that Moses revived a dead person by means of his staff. In the hand of the old man, however, the staff loses its miraculous power, and thus, as the narrator states, is verified the proverb: *Not all men are alike*. It is evident that this moral is the point of the story. Another point which is accentuated through the whole piece is the villainy of the old man, who, despite the miracles he witnesses, perseveres in his imposture.

The third chapter furnishes the *dénouement*: the old man receives his well-deserved punishment. This occurs in the following way: Moses puts up three heaps of dust and transforms them into gold; then, leaving the whole treasure to the avidity of the old man, he departs from him forever. The old man is unable to carry the heavy weight of gold, and espying Bedouins on camels, he solicits their aid, stipulating to give them a third part of the treasure. The Bedouins, however, dispatch the old man to an adjacent city in order to buy bread for them. During his absence they resolve to kill him, which they do, in order to appropriate the whole treasure for themselves. But they pay with their lives for this plot, for the bread was poisoned—probably by the old man who envied them the stipulated reward—and as a result all of them died. Thus poetical justice receives due emphasis and accentuation at the hand of our narrator.

As is seen from this outline, the first story has no connection whatever with the subsequent trend of the narrative. To be sure, Moses is and remains the hero throughout, and it is certainly the consummate aim of the narrator to bring out in relief the overtowering personality of Moses the man; but while in the first story a divine being, an angel, is employed to bring out the greatness of Moses, in the following stories it is always the deceitful old man who forms the contrast to the great lawgiver. This loose construction can only be explained by the fact that the narrator found certain stories relating to Moses, and from these he adopted and remodeled some which pleased him, rejecting the others as unworthy of his attention.

The narrator no doubt employs familiar fable motives. One need not be surprised that he clothes the angel in

white, since angels are always pictured in white garb; for an example comp. Daniel 10, 5 f. and 12, 6. Nor can we find it inappropriate that he makes the angel assume the shape of a preying beast: the rape of a sheep being involved, temptation in the form of a wolf is particularly fitting. The preying animal was to tempt Moses, in order to test his faithfulness.

As to the disguise or transformation itself, it is a motive quite familiar in the fable literature of all times and all nations. In the Talmud we read of the metamorphosis of Satan, who assumes once the shape of a deer,³ another time that of a bird,⁴ and it appears to us quite superfluous to adduce proof for the existence of such popular notions. But what is of especial interest to us in the wolf scene is the manner in which Moses addresses the wolf: Do animals (חיות) speak? To which his interlocutor replies: Thou who wilt one day be called upon to perform great deeds, who wilt be an eye-witness to the story of the golden calf and the speaking ass of Balaam—thou askest such questions? This dialogue leads us straightway to the source of the story, and this source is none other than Mohammedan.

This fact in itself that the golden calf (עֵגֶל) is represented as an animated and living being, is a Mohammedan notion. The Mohammedan legend maintains that Al-Samiri (known from the Koran as the creator of the calf) took dust from under the hoofs of the horse of Gabriel (the guardian angel of the children of Israel), and threw it into the mouth of the calf, whereupon the calf was endowed with life and began to low.⁵ A some-

³ b. Sanh. 95a.

⁴ *Ib.*, 107a.

⁵ All this is found in *Jew. Enc.*, III, 509.

what similar view is contained in the Rabbinic work *Pirḳe di R. Eliezer*,⁶ and we know that this book bears the stamp of Arabic influence.⁷

The dialogue between Moses and the wolf leads us distinctly into Arabic territory. Its prototype we meet in the book *Ḥayyat al-ḥaywān* ("Life of the Animals") by Damīri. In the part relating to the wolf (*dī'b*)—I, 446-452—a number of wolf fables are cited from various writers, which fables, for example, run as follows: A shepherd tending his flock in the desert sees a wolf approach and seize one of his sheep. While the shepherd attempts to save the victim, the wolf begins to expostulate: Dost thou wish to deprive me of the prey which Allah has apportioned me? To which the shepherd ejaculates: Does an animal speak? And the wolf replies: Did not Allah's prophet proclaim still greater miracles?—According to another story, the wolf had a conversation with three of Mohammed's companions, among them Uhbān ibn Aus (أهبان بن أوس). While the latter was feeding his herd a wolf came and seized one of his sheep. Uhbān began to battle with the preying animal, but was astounded at the latter's defense: Dost thou wish to deprive me of the food which God has allotted me?—Does an animal speak?—Does this surprise thee? The wolf then pointed toward Medinah, where the prophet was teaching and preaching, saying: Even greater wonders occur there! Thereupon Uhbān ibn Aus set out on his way to Medinah, came to Mohammed, and related his adventure to him, and finally embraced Islam. Also a tradition is quoted, according to which Uhbān is called "he who conversed with the wolf,"

⁶ c. 45: ויצא העגל הזה גועה.

⁷ Zunz, *Gottesd. Vorträge*, 2d ed., 288.

and his children "the children of him who conversed with the wolf."—Again in another tale (according to Bokhāri) not only the wolf (in the manner recorded above), but also the cow speaks. The cow, being overburdened by her master, turns to him with reproach: Was I created to carry loads? My creator has destined me for ploughing! Thus we see a wolf and a cow speaking. And Mohammed says: I believe it, for Abu Bekr and Omar are with me.—Always reference to Mohammed! And so the speaking cow is of especial interest to us, since under the title "Cow" (بَقَرَة) the second Sura comprises all that which Mohammed, in his customary obscurity and confusion, was able to say of the golden calf, the "red" heifer, and the beheaded heifer.*

Just as in the Mohammedan tradition Mohammed is apparently glorified through the speaking wolf, so also in the person of our narrator a man was found, who, instead of the false prophet, aimed to apotheosize with the same means the first prophet, the father of all prophets, the great teacher Moses. Also Moses is bewildered: Does an animal speak? And immediately the high rank of Moses is pointed out: Thou forsooth wilt receive the Torah from heaven; thou wilt behold a living calf made out of gold; thou wilt record to posterity the story of Balaam and his loquacious ass: and yet thou art astonished? Our narrative thus proves to be polemical in a considerable degree, breaking a lance with Islam, and this in itself is a proof that it originated under Mohammedan influence.

The Oriental origin of our story is furthermore attested by the fact that the speaking bird likewise forms

* For the reference to Damīri I am indebted to my friend B. Heller in Budapest.

a customary motive in the Oriental fables. Thus we find it among others in the last piece of "A Thousand and One Nights," Galland's edition, although the Arabic original does not contain it. The well-known fact of the migration of fairy-tales accounts for the familiarity of the subjects also in the Occident, so that originally there was a reference to the "wonder bird" even in Schiller's "Wallenstein" (Act III, Scene 13); this reference, however, was later obliterated by the poet, while we still find in Turandot "the bird that speaks."⁹

In that part of the narrative which we call the first chapter, there is still another point that may be singled out, viz. the wolf guarding the herd faithfully. Also this motive belongs no doubt to the universal fable literature, but I am not able at present to designate its true source.

In the second chapter, the "staff of Moses" (מטה) forms the most essential element of the story. The thaumaturgical power of the staff is too well-known from the voluminous literature bearing on the subject,¹⁰ and it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon it here. It is only the deeds performed by the aid of the staff that are not known anywhere else.

The element dealing with the deceitful old man accompanying Moses has its counterpart in a similar story contained in the Talmud (b. Gittin 68ab), according to which Ashmedai, the arch-demon, set out on a wandering tour with Benaiah b. Jehoiada, the messenger of Solomon. During this tour some deeds are performed by the demon which are incomprehensible and even repugnant to his

⁹ R. Köhler, *Kleine Schriften*, III, 170 f.

¹⁰ M. Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur sem. Sagenkunde*, 163 f.; see also my "Antoninus und Rabbi," p. 11, note.

companion, being utterly unjust and calculated to bring divine providence into disrepute. At last the companion is made to understand the true meaning of the "wonderful deeds"¹¹ of the unearthly being. This theme is a favorite with fairy-tale writers: in French, for instance, we find it under the title of *l'ange et l'ermitte*.¹² The roots of this fable reach out unto remote antiquity, and their receptive soil is the fantastic Orient. The Talmud itself, besides the case already cited, contains many other tales of such "wonderful deeds."¹³

The essence of the Ashmedai story and its predominating idea is this, that God's messenger, a supramundane being, commits unjust, nay cruel, deeds, punishing the just and rewarding the wicked, and his companion, who sees these acts, is astonished and amazed, until an explanation reaches him. All this is a kind of theodicy. In a Judæo-German *מעשה* -book, which has been made accessible to us by modern investigation,¹⁴ the hero of the tale is the pious R. Joshua b. Levi, who is known from the talmudic haggadah, while the prophet Elijah plays the rôle of the thaumaturgist. The narrative begins as following: R. Joshua b. Levi met one day the prophet Elijah, and asked him: What is my lord doing all the time? The prophet

¹¹ *כל מיליא דחמיה* is the expression in a parallel passage in Midrash Tehillim on 78, 12, p. 177, ed. Buber.

¹² See esp. Isr. Lévi in *REJ.*, VIII, 64-73, and 202-205; also *ib.*, XLVIII, 275-277. The story of Ashmedai and King Solomon is also found in *ספר המעשיות*, and the Genizah fragment forming an Arabic translation of it was printed *ib.*, XLV, 305-308.

¹³ See b. Taanit 22ab and 23ab (see also Abot R. Nathan, Vers. II, c. 19, p. 21a, Schechter). Also b. Shabb. 127b. Comp. also the occurrences in the house of Abuiah (the father of Elisha b. Abuiah) in b. Hag. 15a and p. Hag. II, 1, fol. 77b.

¹⁴ Grünbaum, *Jüdisch-deutsche Chrestomathie*, 393 f.

answered: I travel about in the world, from city to city, from country to country. This prologue is apparently derived from the Book of Job; yet it must be remarked that it is missing in all the Hebrew versions, which are very numerous, while the prototype of the Judæo-German מעשה-book must have contained it.

Now let us proceed to the examination of our text. Moses asks the old man: Whither goest thou? And he answers: I go to and fro in the earth (שׁוֹט). This scarcely admits of a misconstruction, and it is evident that our text bestows on Moses the rôle of the miracle-worker, while the deceitful old man is introduced in the same manner as the demon in the Ashmedai story. It is only when we consider the demon as model that we understand the rôle of the deceitful old man. The thought of Faust and Mephistopheles suggests itself, and this is already of absorbing interest to the universal history of civilization. Still the introductory words remind me of the Ashmedai tale, while the deeds performed by Moses with his staff have their parallel, as mentioned above, nowhere else.

In the absence of a better source let us not omit to point out a slight trace, which is liable to give us a clue to the character of our story. In the great mediæval collection of fables, known under the name *Gesta Romanorum*, we find the following anecdote: Three men travel on the road, and all three possess only one loaf of bread. Says one: Comrades, let the bread belong to him who will dream the most beautiful dream. Two of them fall asleep in order to dream the desired dream, but the third man consumes the bread meanwhile.¹⁵ A violent strife over food

¹⁵ *Gesta Roman.*, ed. Oesterley, p. 436-438; see on p. 728 the unusually large literature, among others also *Toledot Jesu*, which illustrates sufficiently the wide currency of this fable material.

occurs also in the Jewish "Life of Jesus" (*Toledot Jeshu*, ed. Huldreich, 1705, p. 51); however, here not bread is involved, but a fat goose, for the possession of which Jesus, Peter, and Judas vie with each other, the strife reminding us of the controversy between the apostles and Zebedee's sons (Matth. 20, 24),¹⁶ and then Peter maintains that he was sitting in his dream near the throne of the Son of God. No less a man than Gaston Paris, the famous authority on fables, to whom we are also indebted for the investigation of the above-mentioned legend of the angel and the hermit, has already proved that a connection exists between this strife and the parable of the "three rings"; and it is the same Gaston Paris who links together the anecdote of *Historia Jcschua Nazareni* with an anecdote from the Arabic book *Nuzhetol Udeba* (?) (i. e. *nuzhat al-udaba*) according to which it was the Jew among those three men who dreamed that he had consumed the bread, and this was naturally the most beautiful dream. The point then to be brought out is this, that in the competition over the bread the Jew is the wisest, which supposition unfortunately does not seem to be borne out in many cases.

In the same chapter, a special detail still calls for our attention. The deers which were captured by means of the staff were not consumed entirely: their bones were left untouched, and these Moses resuscitated to new life. This miracle of Moses does not seem to be simply a copy of Ezekiel's resurrection scene, but it rather rests on a well-circulated belief, according to which certain parts of

¹⁶ See my "*Leben Jesu*," p. 162

¹⁷ G. Paris, "La Parole des Trois Anneaux," in *REJ.*, XI, 15; printed again in *La Poésie du Moyen Age*, II^e série, II^e ed., Paris 1903, 159.

the body, which control animal life, are tabooed. Even according to the Torah the blood should not be eaten, for the blood is the soul of every flesh (Lev. 17, 14); and so also the Greeks abstained from eating the brains, believing them to be the abode of every sense of life. Even in our own days some savage tribes leave entirely untouched the head, the wings, and the legs of the birds which they seize and consume, offering these parts as sacrifices to their gods and beseeching them that out of these may arise new immortal creatures of the same kind.¹⁸ This is the most essential element in this belief, and it may serve to elucidate certain ordinances in the Torah (e. g. the Passover sacrifice) as well as our anecdote; yet I should have preferred finding our anecdote as a whole in some one Arabic tale, for, after all that has been said, there can be no doubt that also here we must have recourse to Arabic sources. However, the proper source is unknown to me. Thus also I am unable to fit into a larger frame the characteristic trait of Moses, admonishing the deceitful old man after every miracle to bethink himself before he swears and to consider the sanctity of the oath. The old man swears impudently and wickedly that he has no bread, persevering in this assertion despite the repeated admonitions, until finally he is caught in his own net.

As against the difficulty in identifying the one part of the narrative, it is a great satisfaction to us to be able to state, that in the matter of the youth,¹⁹ who is being killed by the old man, there is ample material in the fable literature to corroborate it. Of this rich material, as we

¹⁸ Treated by me in the Hungarian Journal *Ethnographia*, X, 277 f.

¹⁹ תינוק of the Hebrew text need not be a small child, but, according to general usage, may also designate a youth.

shall note soon, only the following three points have been retained in our text: a well (באר) in the desert;²⁰ the youth with money in his hand, who is being slain; and finally the old man, who stands in some connection with the youth. This is all—a mere skeleton, such as the one that remained from the slain deer after its flesh had been consumed. The pathetic tragedy in the story of the youth was equally sacrificed by our narrator, so that only skin and bones are left behind. The narrative in its present form is stripped of its beauty and great import, and the resulting moral is scarcely recognizable. This defacement can be accounted for only through lack of understanding in the author, or else through an unfortunate accident, for deliberate distortion seems to be excluded. The remarkable story, as it appears in the Judæo-German "*Megillat Esther*,"²¹ runs in brief as follows:

It was Moses' habit to roam about in the country, in order to give free play to his meditations. Once upon a time he was sitting far away from a *well*, which, however, he was able to overlook, ruminating in his usual manner. Suddenly he noticed a man approaching the well, drinking from it, and resuming his way, after dropping a money-bag unknowingly. Immediately after him a poor man came to the well, quenched his thirst, picked up the money-bag, and departed joyfully. Also a third man came the same way, drank, and sat down to rest. Meanwhile the first man became aware of his loss, hastened back to the well, found there the resting man, and with rage and fury demanded his money from him. The latter, knowing him-

²⁰ In a truly Jewish spirit it says that Moses goes to the well in order to purify himself after easing his nature. In all the other versions the well serves only to quench the thirst of the wanderers.

²¹ Also in Grünbaum, *Jüdisch-deutsche Chrestomathie*, 215 f.

self innocent, repudiated the accusation with equal vigor, so that a quarrel soon ensued with the result that the first man, who had lost the money, *killed* the third man, after which he ran away. It is true that Moses, who witnessed all this, hastened to the spot in order to save the innocent man, but he came there too late. With hands raised towards heaven, he entreats God to reveal to him these mysterious workings of fate, and in answer a voice from heaven says: Know that the man who lost the money-bag, although pious and God-fearing himself, inherited it from his father who had robbed it from the father of the man who now found it; and so, by divine Providence, the latter came to his rightful possession. The third man, however, who was slain, although apparently he committed no crime—know that in years gone by he had slain the brother of this man, and there were no witnesses to accuse him; hence I have ordained it so, that the one who lost the money should kill the other at the well, so that his brother might be avenged. Thus the human mind, says God, cannot perceive my measures (*מדות*), and therefore let no one say that God is unjust.

This graceful eulogy over fate in the frame of a delightful narrative was elaborated poetically by the German poet Gellert. In his poem "Das Schicksal" he narrates the following parable: When Moses stood on the mountain, supplicating God to make His way known to him,²² God commanded him to look down. When he did so, he saw a mounted soldier descend from his horse and quench his thirst at a well. Scarcely had he gone, when a youth²³

²² Comp. Exod. 33, 13.

²³ "Knabe" agrees with *תינוק* of our text and not with "Mann" of the Judæo-German text.

came running from his herd, and drank from the same source. Here he found the purse which the soldier had lost, and seizing it he returned to his flock. Next came a frail old man, sipped from the well, and, overcome by fatigue, fell asleep. Meanwhile the rider returned, and impetuously demanded his money from the old man. In vain the old man asseverates that he had found nothing: the rider stabs him. Overwhelmed with grief Moses falls on his face, whereupon he hears the divine voice saying:

*"Denn wiss, es hat der Greis, der jetzt im Blute liegt,
Des Knaben Vater einst erschlagen,
Der den verlornen Raub zuvor davon getragen."*

The ways of fate are presented in this poem in a genuine poetical manner and with much more precision than in the Judæo-German text: The victim is an old man who cannot defend himself; seemingly he deserves our compassion, in reality, however, he is the slayer of the father of the youth, who had found the money, and thus the latter unconsciously becomes the instrument through which the slayer of his father receives his long-delayed punishment.

Many people have found delight in Gellert's poem, without surmising that the fable which forms the basis of this poem is of Oriental origin. This fact became known in 1860, when it was pointed out for the first time that Gellert's poem bears striking resemblance to a poem by a Persian poet Ġami whose Persian text together with an English translation was first published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1860, pp. 10-17. Also according to the Persian poet Moses desires to fathom God's decrees, whereupon God makes him observe these incidents

at a well: a horseman comes galloping to the well, in the same manner as the prophet Al-Chidr (الخضر) in former days. He divests himself of his raiment, and bathes hurriedly in the water. On leaving, he forgets his purse on the ground near the water. A wanderer wends his way towards the same place, where he beholds the money, and seizing it, he makes haste to depart. After him comes a blind old man, performs the ritual ablutions and also the prayers prescribed to a pilgrim. At this point the horseman comes back, and boisterously demands his money. The blind old man retorts harshly, whereupon he is slain. Moses is startled at the sight of these things, and he entreats God to grant him an explanation.

Then came the Divine Voice: "Oh thou censurer of my ways,

Square not these doings of mine with thy rule!

That young boy had once a father

Who worked for hire and so gained his bread;

He wrought for that horseman and built him his house

Long he wrought in that house for hire,

But ere he received his due, he fell down and died,

And in that purse was the hire, which the youth
carried away.

Again, that blind man in his young days of sight

Had spilt the blood of his murderer's father;

The son by the law of retaliation slays him to-day.

And gives him release from the price of blood in
the day of retribution."

In Gami's poem as well as in our Hebrew text the motive for seeking the well consists in the ritual ablutions

and the required prayers, and this motive is intelligible only to Jews and Mohammedans. Gellert, the Occidental bard, had to reject such a motive as being beyond the comprehension of his readers, and hence he speaks of drinking from the well. This slight deviation does not, of course, exclude the assumption that he was guided by an Oriental archetype. It is true that he knew no Persian; it is equally true that Ġami's poem remained unpublished in his days. Still the scholar who first pointed to Ġami²⁴ concludes his observations as follows: "Gellert undoubtedly derived his story from No. 237 of the "Spectator,"²⁵ where it was rendered by Hughes as an old Jewish tradition. Both redactions, however, the one by Hughes (=Gellert) as well as the one by Ġami, go positively back to a single ultimate source. Which is this? I conjecture that this legend was originally incorporated in an Arabic fable collection, which Ġami used directly and which, translated into Hebrew, became known to Hughes. An authentication of both the Arabic original and the Hebrew translation would prove of great interest."

Dr. Cyrus Adler has kindly called my attention to a poem by Thomas Parnell (1679-1717) entitled "The Hermit" (see *The Poems of Dr. Thomas Parnell*, in *The Works of the English Poets*, edited by Samuel Johnson, London 1790, vol. XXVII, p. 81), in which two hundred years ago the same matter was poetically treated. In this poem the Hermit is wandering with a Youth and becomes witness of apparently unjust deeds. In a noble house he steals a cup of great value and gives it to an avaricious

²⁴ H. Brockhaus in *ZDMG.*, XIV (1860), 710.

²⁵ *The Spectator*, III, London, 1753, p. 264; yet the article is not signed by Hughes, but by somebody with an initial C.

landlord. In another noble house he kills the only son of his host; furthermore, on the road, he makes a servant perish in the floods of a rapid stream. To the astonished Hermit he finally explains the motives of his acts, teaching him as follows:

“Then know the truth of government divine,
And let these scruples be no longer thine.

The Maker justly claims that world he made,
In this the right of Providence is laid....”.

The wish of the scholar that the source might be identified has not yet, as far as I can see, been realized, and even to-day, after a space of fifty years, it still remains a desideratum. As to the Hebrew source, the Judæo-German text demonstrates sufficiently that the legend was known also in Jewish circles, and our Hebrew text, which contains the rudiments of the legend, shows it in its Hebrew garb. But the Arabic original is still missing. In its stead an additional Persian text has been found which tells the same story in prose.²⁶ Also here we have a horseman and religious ablutions, and also here the victim is a blind man. The explanation imparted to Moses runs like this: The father of the money-finding youth was a shepherd to the horseman, and the latter refused him his justly earned wages. In the purse there was exactly the amount that the horseman owed to the shepherd. The blind man, however, had formerly killed the horseman's father, and so the son, by slaying him, had only exercised the right of retaliation.

The horseman, figuring in the Persian texts and also in Gellert's poem, might induce us for a moment to think

²⁶ Behrmaner in *ZDMG.*, XVI (1862), 762.

that the *Gesta Romanorum* is the source sought for since most of the stories in this collection turn about a soldier (*miles*). However, this is not the right clue; let us rather keep constantly the Arabic source in mind. Thus I consider it useful to point to a well-known passage in the Koran which seems to contain not alone the story of fate, but also the whole of our Hebrew text. The Koran is a kind of reservoir that has preserved many Jewish legends; but more than that, it is also the living fountain from which spring forth new legends. The Koran may have been instrumental in shaping the Moses legend among the Arabs as it appears in our Hebrew text to-day. The following is related in the Koran, ch. XVIII, verses 59-82:²⁷

Moses goes forth with his servant (Joshua) to the place where the two seas meet.²⁸ Near that place the servant forgets his fish, and this takes its way freely in the sea. As they wander farther,²⁹ Moses desires to eat. Then it dawns upon his servant, that he forgot the fish on the rock on which they lodged during the tide, and that this was nothing else but the doing of Satan.³⁰ Continuing their tour of inspection they encounter Al-Chidr,³¹ and Moses begs leave to follow him. The divine man bores a hole in a ship, kills a youth, and builds the wall of a city whose inhabitants refused to give them food. Moses is astounded, and then he is initiated into the mysteries of fate.

²⁷ This passage in the Koran was already pointed out by A. Geiger and Isr. Lévi; recently it was treated by Wünsche, *Aus Israel's Lehrhallen*, 173 f.

²⁸ Hence Moses investigates also here, as well as in the other legends.

²⁹ The motive of wandering recurs in all the versions.

³⁰ Comp. what was said above concerning the rôle of Satan.

³¹ The prophet Elijah.

The relation of Moses to Al-Chidr, the deeds accomplished by Al-Chidr, the explanation, and so forth—all this agrees with what we know from the Talmud and the *מעשה*-book about Ashmedai and Benaiah, or about Elijah and Moses. But also the motives of our new Hebrew text recur here: the old man resembles Satan of the Arabs; denial of the bread corresponds to the loss of the fish; slaying of the youth; arrival in an inhospitable city, and so on. We may therefore assume that our text was derived from an Arabic original which in one way or another enlarged upon the version of the Koran. The variations in the Hebrew text are conscious and intentional, taking into account the Jewish standpoint and also the high rank of Moses. Equally intentional is the Jewish color given to the story of the speaking wolf.

And now the story of the third chapter still remains to be treated. Its chief feature forms the retribution of the deceitful old man at the hand of the camel-drivers, whom he sought to deprive of their reward. At last he was "the biter bitten." This familiar quotation forms the key-note after which many products of the fable literature are modeled and cast, e. g. a number of stories by Margaret of Navarre in the "Heptameron" which appeared in 1543.²² All these narratives, as the "Three Rings" in Lessing's "Nathan der Weise," are derived, as is well-known, from the Orient.

At last we come to the investigation of the singular title *מעשה על דור עשירי* which constitutes the heading of our narrative. This title is found as heading on every page of the original manuscript, and since this contains nine pages in small quarto, the title recurs nine times, and

²² See Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte*, 21st ed., p. 156.

is therefore absolutely certain. In addition, the term דור עשירי occurs three times in the text itself: first, when the wolf swears to guard the sheep faithfully, saying: If I eat them, let me be "of the tenth generation"; a second time, when Moses, perceiving that the old man perjured himself, observes, Truly, this man belongs to the tenth generation; a third time, when the author himself observes that the moral which the story aims to propound is this, that men of the tenth generation are heretics. Thus the author operates with the expression "tenth generation" as with a well-known phrase, though we are unable to tell whence he got it. In the Talmud and Midrash it does not occur with this particular connotation. It is true that we find in the Talmud the expression לכת שלישית³³, and לישן תליחא³⁴ even seems to be a fixed phrase; however, we are unable to establish any connection between these forms of speech and the case before us. The Bible, indeed, offers us the expression דור עשירי ready-made in the following sentence: "Even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of the Lord forever" (Deut. 23, 4); yet I do not know any Midrash or commentary on this passage which would stamp these words as a fixed term having a color of its own. Thus nothing remains but to think of the Mishnic expression: Ten generations there were from Adam unto Noah, and ten generations there were from Noah unto Abraham, and all of these were wicked before God (Abot v, 2); and so it seems that, due to an association of ideas, the term "tenth generation" was coupled with the term "wicked

³³ p. Hag. II, 1, fol. 77a, line 72; b. Hag. 14b; Midrash Hagadol on Gen. 1, 1, p. 6, ed. Schechter. Comp. the excellent deductions of Bacher, *Ag. der Tann.*, I, 2d ed., p. 15.

³⁴ For proofs see Grünbaum, *Beiträge zur Sem. Sagenkunde*, p. 47.

generation." The text itself mentions only the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion, both being subjects of repeated mention by the rabbis. This clue is far from being faultless, and we would gladly exchange it for something better. Thus it deserves to be noted that the primitive Christians were called by their enemies "new people" and "third generation"³⁵ and this is conceivable only when those words conveyed an insult or a curse. Furthermore, a responsum of Hai Gaon is to be taken into consideration which fits our case especially, since it gives information concerning apologues and had its origin in Arabic soil. In the apologue cited therein for illustration we find it repeated time and again that the lion who committed a robbery receives his punishment in the third generation.³⁶

The composition and language of our text are not quite what one would wish. We have already called attention to the fact that the narrative sometimes has a sudden break, and that, for instance, the slaying of the youth is more hinted at than placed in firm relief. As to the language, it is by no means as beautiful as we find it in the collection of narratives ascribed to R. Nissim. Still the author made an effort to imitate the style of the later Midrashim and to write a pure Hebrew which is, as far as I can see, purged of Aramaisms and Arabisms. However, his style is very clumsy and unwieldy, having neither swing nor poetry. It seems that the author was not a man of literary skill, that he did not belong to the guild of the learned, but was a man of the people who derived pleasure from

³⁵ Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, 1st ed., book II, ch. 6, with *Excurs.* (esp. p. 200 f.), where the peculiar expression is explained thoroughly.

³⁶ תשובות הנאונים, ed. Lyck, No. 30, p. 13.

fairy-tales and fables and who, finding a model fitting his purpose, excerpts one thing³⁷ and disregards another. Certainly literary achievement was not his strong point.

Despite all that, we find him quoting from the Talmud, as e. g. the sentence *וכך אמרו ר"ל בעלי אמונה אין אדם יכול לעמוד במחיצתן* which, however, is not found anywhere in this wording. The phrase *לֹא כָל הַיְצוּרִים שׁוֹיִם*, to judge by appearance, is not a rabbinical proverb, but some philosophical maxim. The sentence "He who walks with his neighbor four yards will not suffer any punishment" (*מַעֲבִיר עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת הַדִּין*) which is cited in the name of the rabbis is likewise not to be found. At the end of the narrative the author, under *כמו שאמרנו* (as we have said), introduces a preceding sentence which, however, is not found in our text, but must have been in the larger work which formed the prototype. We shall be able to appreciate the disposition of our author only then, when we shall have found the models which he followed, or did not follow, not in mere fragments, but as a composite whole; for we are absolutely sure that he was a compiler. That which has remained without elucidation in this treatise will probably be explained conclusively by others who are more familiar with folk-lore than the writer of these lines.

מעשה על דור העשירי

[א] מעשה במשה רבינו עליו השלום שהיה רועה במדבר, נדמה לו מלאך אחר ברמות זאב לבן. עד שבא אצל משה רבינו אותו הזאב, אמר לו שלום עליך אתה אדוני איש האלהים. מיד נתיירא משה ממנו.

³⁷ This is perhaps the reason why we have in our text numerous dots which have been reproduced by us.

ראהו! הזאב, אמר לו בבקשה ממך תן לי מן הצאן שאני רעב ואתפרנס ממנה ואמלא³⁸ רעבון שלי. אמר לו משה אין החיות מדברות! אמר הזאב למשה, אתה שעתידה תורה לינתן על ידך תאמר כך! תן לי במהרה ואלך לי לדרכי ואעשה רצון יוצרי. אמר לו משה, אלו הצאן אינם שלי, והצאן ליתרו חותני, והתורה אמרה והייתם נקיים מיי ומישראל, ואיני אלא שכיר, ויעקוב אבינו כשהיה רועה צאן לבן אמר הייתי ביום אכלני חורב וק"ב³⁹, וכך אמרו רז"ל בעלי אמונה אין אדם יכול לעמוד במחיצתו⁴⁰. אמר הזאב לא באתי לישב אצלך, אלא לך אצל יתרו ואמור לו... אמר משה אם כדברידך שאלך ואומר לו, מי ישב אצל הצאן לשמרם, והלא יבואו חיות מדבר, כמה זאבים כמה נמרים הלא אתה אחד מהם, והלא ק"ו מחיות משכלות⁴¹... אמר הזאב אם תניחני לשמור אותם לא אויז אחת מהן, העבודה לשמים שלא אוכל מהן כלום... ואם אוכל יהא⁴² מדור עשירי, שמא הם גדולים ממעשה דור המבול ודור הפלגה ודמיין⁴³... א"ל הוא שאמרתי לך, הם שקרנים כחשנים⁴⁴, ורמות מעשיהם יבוא לידך. אח"כ הלך משה ודבר ליתרו בכל המעשים שאירעו לו... א"ל יתרו תן לו ממבחר הצאן וידך כירי. הלך משה אצל הזאב והוא שומר הצאן וראשו בין ברכיו, א"ל מה אמר לך חותנך? א"ל שתקח לך ממבחר הצאן. נסתכל בו ולא ראהו...

[ב] לימים הלך משה להר חורב והיתה⁴⁵ המטה בידו שלקחה מבית יתרו, בשעה שאסר אותו בבית האסורים ושהה שם י"ב שנה⁴⁶, ועד שהוא מהלך בדרך במדבר, הגיע לפרשת דרכים, מצאו אדם אחד זקן, א"ל שלום עליך רבינו, א"ל שלום עליך, א"ל משה להיכן אתה הולך? א"ל לשוט

³⁸ MS. ואמלי.

³⁹ (Gen. 31, 40) וקרח כלילא =

⁴⁰ Comp. b. Taanit 8a ב' בעלי אמונה כו'; b. Hag. 17a; p. Shabbat VI, end, fol. 8d, l. 27.

⁴¹ Fragmentary.

⁴² Perhaps אהא?

⁴³ ודומיהם?

⁴⁴ Comp. below, end.

⁴⁵ מטה in our text is fem. The writer had the Arabic **مخيم** in mind.

⁴⁶ According to *Sefer Ha-Yashar* on *Shemot* (ed. Zolkiew, 1875, p. 53b and 54a) ten years.

בארץ⁴⁷, א"ל יש לך פת לאכול במדבר, לפי שהוא לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן⁴⁸ שלא תהא⁴⁹ עייף ויגע וצמא... אמר אותו האיש יש לי שתי גלוסקאות... א"ל משה ואני יש לי ג' גלוסקאות, א"ל בוא ונערבם יחד ויהיה לנו צדה לדרך. אח"כ הוציא כל אחד שלו במניין ולקח אותם הזקן ועשם⁵¹ יחד בתרמילו ונתן על כתיפו. א"ל משה תן דעתך על אלו. הלכו כמו ד' מילין או ה' מילין, אמרו זה לזה נאכל מן הפת כדי שנשיב את נפשינו מן הרעב; הוציאו שתי גלוסקאות לכל אחד ככר ואכלום... אח"כ הלכו ויט⁵² להם הג' האחרות ביד הזקן הנשארות עד שרעבו רעבון גדול. אמר כל אחד לחבירו, נאכל שם⁵³ כדי שנחיה את נפשותינו! הוציאו ב' גלוסקאות ואכלום. ונשתייר להם ככר אחד עד שהלכו במדבר כמו חצי היום; אמר משה לזקן תן לנו הככר שנשתייר לנו. הכחיש אותו הזקן הככר ונשבע שבועה חמורה שאין להם אלא ד' ככרות. עד שהלכו מעט בדרך זימן להם הקב"ה שני צבאים. אמר משה לאותו הזקן, לך תן לנו אחד מן הצבאים! אמר הזקן למ"ר ע"ה וכי שוטה אני שאלך אצל הצבאים, וכי יש קל מן הצבי?... א"ל משה קח המטה בידך ועשה אותה כנגדם. לקח המטה בידו והראם ולא יכלו לזוז ממקומם, מיד לקחם ושחטם משה ועשה מהם צלי. אמר משה לזקן, הזהר שלא תשבר מן העצמות. עד שאכלו ושתו ולקחו מן הצבאים, הניח משה עצם על עצמו, ולקח המטה והיניחה⁵⁴ עליהם ונתפלל תפלה שלמה לפני בוראו והחיה הקב"ה את הצבאים ועמדו על רגליהם. אמר משה לזקן, משביעך אני במי שהחיה את הצבאים ואין להם לא בשר ולא גידים של עשית קנוניא⁵⁵ על הככר; נשבע שלא אכלו ולא שלח

⁴⁷ Comp. Job 1, 7; 2, 2.

⁴⁸ Num. 20, 5.

⁴⁹ Perhaps אהא ?

⁵⁰ κόλληξ, see my *Lehnwörter*, II, 175, and what I have written in the Nahum Sokolow Jubilee Book (Warsaw 1904), p. 489.

⁵¹ Perhaps וישמים ?

⁵² Perhaps ויש[או] ? Comp. below ונשתייר. Or is it ויש[אור] ?
האחרות is to be connected with הנשארות.

⁵³ Arabism.

⁵⁴ MS. והינחה.

⁵⁵ The phrase עשה קנוניא occurs frequently in the Talmud, and is derived from the Greek *koinōnía*, which the 'Aruk explains by רמאות (deceit).

בו יד. הלכו במדבר וצמאו למים, לקח משה המטה והוציא להם מים מצור החלמיש עד ששתו ורוו; אמר משה לזקן משביעך אני במי שהוציא מים מצור החלמיש שלא שלחת יד בכבר, נשבע שבועה כבראשונה שלא שלח יד בו ולא פה. אמר משה נלך בדרך, הלכו ומצאו שם עיר אחת והיו בני העיר בוכים לפי שהיה להם⁵⁶ זקן אחד והיה להם כאב. א"ל משה למה אתם בוכים כולכם? אמרו הנה נפשותינו תחת נפשו! ריחם עליהם משה ונתפלל על אותו המת והניח המטה עליו, רעש המת וחיה. אמר משה לזקן, משביעך אני במי שהחיה את המת להיכן בא הכבר? נשבע שבועה חמורה שלא שלח בו יד ולא פה. אמר משה בידוע שזה מדור עשירי בודאי. עד שהלכו במדבר, נפנה משה לעסקיו, אמר משה לזקן, הנח זה המטה בידך עד שאלך ואטהר את עצמי בזו הבאר; עד שהלך משה מעמו, דבר האיש בעצמו ואמר, זאת המטה שעשה בה משה כל הניסים האלו, אלך ואקח אותה ואחיה בה את המתים. לקח אותה והלך. עד שהו[א] בדרך, מצא שם כפר אחד ואנשי הכפר מה מעשיהם — היו יושבים והיה אצלם תינוק שיש עמו ממון, בא אותו זקן והרג התינוק ולקח את ממונו לקח המטה והניחה על התינוק, והיה סבור שיעשה כמשה, ולא לחנם אמרו לא כל היצורים שוים⁵⁷, עד שבא מטה ודרף אחריו, מצאו שהוא בצער מבקשים להרגו, והתורה אמרה נפש תחת נפש⁵⁸, נתפלל משה והחיה את התינוק והציל את נפש הזקן מן המיתה, לפי שאמרו רז"ל כל ההולך ארבע אמות הוא וחבירו הקב"ה מעביר עליהן את הדין⁵⁹.

[ג] עד שהלכו מצאו שם נחל ועשה משה ג' כריות⁶⁰ מן העפר ונתפלל עליהם משה ונעשו זהב. אמר משה לאותו הזקן, ראה מה עשה הקב"ה! אמר לו הזקן למרע"ה למי זה, אמר לו מי שאכל את הכבר יקח ב' ואחת למי שלא אכל. אמר הזקן, אני הוא שאכלתי את הכבר, עד שהורה אמר משה בבקשה ממך קח הכל, והלך לו משה רע"ה ולא ידע היכן בא. אח"כ נצטער אותו זקן על הזהב, עד שבאו

⁵⁶ שמת להם?

⁵⁷ This quotation is unknown to me; it seems to be a philosophical maxim.

⁵⁸ Ex. 21, 23.

⁵⁹ Citation not identified.

⁶⁰ Sing. כרי .

בני אדם ויש עמהם נמלים, אמר להם הזקן בואו ושאו את הזהב, שני שלישים לי ואחד לכם. אמרו אנחנו רעיבים, אלא לך תן מזאת העיר פת שנחיה את נפשותינו! עד שהלך וחישוב בלבו באותה העיר שיעשה להם סם המות בין הפת; והם חשבו בשעה שיבוא אצלם יתיו את ראשו; עד שבא התיו את ראשו, והם אכלו מן הפת ומתו, ונשא הממון מוצנע, וכל זה כדי שתידע שדור עשירי כופרים, כמו שאמרנו, שהם שבענים כחשנים שקרנים כפרנים והם רעים. (השם ב"ה יצילנו מהם למען שמו ולמען חסדיו. אכי"ר⁶¹ תושל"בע⁶²).

⁶¹ .אמן כן יהי רצון.

⁶² .תם ונשלם שבח לאל בורא עולם.